



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

In every American community, youth run away from home, are kicked out of their house, leave the juvenile justice system with nowhere to go, become orphans, or exit the child welfare system with no support to enable successful transitions to adulthood. Unfortunately, no community is immune to family homelessness, and the upheaval that accompanies it. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, child and youth homelessness were at record levels. Public schools reported more than 1.5 million children and youth experiencing homelessness, with an additional 1.4 million children under age six experiencing homelessness. At least one in thirty adolescents ages 13-17, and nearly one in ten young adults ages 18-24, are estimated to experience homelessness on their own. These numbers are now likely much higher because of the economic downturn and family stress associated with the pandemic. Students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities are also disproportionately likely to experience homelessness, compounding educational barriers and trauma.

Now more than ever, these children and youth need our attention. While the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of all American children and youth, homeless children and youth experienced significant losses—losses that will linger, and that will require significant resources if they are to regain their footing. An estimated one in four homeless children and youth, which is approximately 420,000 homeless students, have gone unidentified and possibly unenrolled in

public schools. This is especially concerning given the academic challenges they faced prior to the pandemic. A national survey of youth providers also revealed a decreasing number of beds for homeless youth were available to comply with distance and other COVID requirements from the CDC, totaling only 327 beds across 63 communities.

In order to help children and youth recover from the impact of homelessness and the disruption, loss, and suffering of the pandemic, we must invest in the programs that are uniquely able to identify and serve them. Therefore, as you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, we urge you to provide strong support for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education. These are the only two federal programs focused specifically on child and youth homelessness.

RHYA programs prevent trafficking, identify survivors, and provide services to runaway, homeless, and disconnected youth. Through the excellent work of local street outreach, shelter, transitional living programs, and maternity group homes, RHYA helps homeless youth and parents access education, employment, personal savings, and family reconnection services. RHYA was most recently funded at \$136.78 million, which equals a mere \$33 per young person per year of investment in the life of a young person experiencing homelessness.

It is time that Congress recognizes the critical role of programs funded through RHYA and provide \$300 million. Only 25 percent of applicants receive funding due to the severe underfunding of this program and an increased appropriation would help move our American communities significantly closer to being able to meet the largely unmet need of providing support services and housing options for minors and young adults experiencing homelessness. HHS also would have the potential to support hundreds of additional programs that help service providers prevent and respond to youth and young adult homelessness.

The EHCY program is the only federal education program that removes barriers to school enrollment, attendance, and success caused by homelessness. These barriers include being unable to meet enrollment requirements; high mobility resulting in lack of continuity and absenteeism; lack of transportation; lack of supplies; poor health, fatigue, and hunger; and emotional crisis/mental health issues. Nationally, only 24 percent of local educational agencies receive EHCY subgrants due to lack of funding, which limits the ability of schools to identify homeless students, ensure their access to school, and connect them to community supports. Local homeless liaisons, however, help identify homeless children and youth, ensure their school access and stability, provide them direct support service, and coordinate with community agencies to meet basic needs.

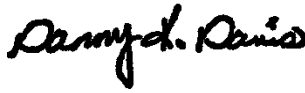
Congress last appropriated \$106.5 million for EHCY in Fiscal Year 2021. Given the impact of the pandemic, and research showing that not completing high school is the greatest single risk factor for experiencing homelessness as a young person, we continue to support increased funding for this critical program. An appropriation of \$300 million would sustain the support to students experiencing homelessness provided through COVID-19 relief packages while increasing the number of EHCY subgrants to reach at least half of all school districts nationwide.

Investing in a young person's life will enable them to avoid chronic homelessness, intergenerational cycles of poverty, and pervasive instances of trauma. We therefore urge you to support strong funding levels for EHCY and RHYA programs in the FY22 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your support of programs to help solve child and youth homelessness.

Sincerely,



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress

/s/
Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

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Gwen Moore
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Karen Bass
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Joyce Beatty
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Ted Deutch
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Stephen Lynch
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Ron Kind
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Bill Foster
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David Scott
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Mary Gay Scanlon
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Maxine Waters
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Cori Bush
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Albio Sires
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Brian Fitzpatrick
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